

KNOX COUNTY COMMISSION

Special Meeting - Municipalities

Tuesday – August 13, 2009 - 2:30 p.m.

A special meeting of the Knox County Commission and the Municipalities of Knox County was held on Tuesday, August 13, 2009, at 2:30 p.m., at the county courthouse, 62 Union Street, Rockland, Maine. Executive Assistant Constance Johanson was present to record the minutes of the meeting.

Commission members present were: Anne Beebe-Center, Commissioner District #1, Richard L. Parent, Jr., Commissioner District #2, and Roger A. Moody, Commissioner District #3.

County staff present included: County Administrator Andrew Hart, Finance Director Kathy Robinson, EMA Director Ray Sisk, and Executive Assistant Constance Johanson.

Others present were: St. George Town Manager John Falla, Rockland City Manager Rosemary Kulow, Hope Town Manager Jon Duke, Dan Staples, Selectman from Cushing, Alton Grover, Selectman from Cushing, and Dorothy Meriwether, Selectperson from South Thomaston.

Meeting with Knox County Municipalities – Agenda Thursday – August 13, 2009 – 2:30 p.m.

- I. 2:30 Meeting Called To Order**
- II. 2:31 Topics for Discussion**
 - 1. Fiscal Year Change Update
 - 2. Animal Control Committee
 - 3. Solid Waste Committee
 - 4. Other
- III. Action List**

Items to be researched or followed up for the next meeting.
- IV. Next Meeting Date and Place**
- V. Adjourn**

I. Meeting Called to Order

Commission Chair Anne Beebe-Center called the August 13, 2009 special meeting with the municipalities of Knox County to order at 2:34 p.m. Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center began by stating that this meeting was a follow-up of the last meeting's discussion with a new topic of discussion being introduced. The new topic was on the possibility of changing to a fiscal year.

II. Topics for Discussion

1. Fiscal Year Change Update:

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center explained that with the state take-over of the county jails and the subsequent consolidation into a state-wide corrections system, the jail budget was no longer part of a county's budget. Some counties changed to a fiscal year because the jail budgets were based on the state's fiscal year.

County Administrator Andrew Hart reported that the department heads were asked to submit six-month budgets to determine how that would impact the County and then try to determine how the change would impact the towns. Mr. Hart planned to meet with the four largest tax paying municipalities in the County (Rockland, Rockport, Camden and St. George) to discuss the impact to those towns. The meeting would include town managers and finance directors. If the response was favorable, then the County would proceed by scheduling meetings with the other towns. Without a favorable response, the additional meetings would not take place and discussions on changing to a fiscal year would be discontinued.

The six-month budget schedule would run from January 1 to June 31, 2010. It appears that it is probably not feasible to try to make a change this close to the 2010 budget season. Towns that are already on a fiscal year have had their budgets approved. Their approved budgets do not account for the County's change and its accompanying impact. The towns could take out a TAN, but it does not appear that there is enough time to make the change this year.

If the towns are in favor of making the change, it can probably be in place for 2011. It has been suggested that one positive thing in making the change is that it will save money by not

having to borrow money for County operations before the tax revenue is received. One consideration is the airport's impact on the budget because the funding of airport projects and the turn-around time to receive reimbursement. The amount of the TAN will probably be less if the County changes to a fiscal year, but the airport projects have to be funded up front and are then reimbursed.

There is \$50,000.00 in the 2009 budget for the TAN with an interest rate of 1.3 percent. This rate may change, but it might be prudent to continue with a TAN for cash flow purposes. If the County took out a TAN over a five year period to change to a fiscal year, it was estimated that the interest rate would be at four (4) percent. The County receives revenue in September from the towns paying for their dispatch fees. The taxes are due in November.

No definite decision has been made to change to a fiscal year. About half the towns are on a calendar year and the other half is on a fiscal year. A decision will have to be made soon because the budget process begins in October.

Dan Staples of Cushing asked if the town's tax structure would change with taxes possibly due biannually. He suggested that the coastal towns have a number of seasonal workers whose income is largely made from June to December. Tax bill are more readily paid at the end of the year in many cases.

Commissioner Roger Moody suggested that the tax structure may not have to change because the towns could borrow money to pay the County, especially since they already have to borrow for town operations.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center suggested that the County move forward with the issue of changing to a fiscal year by discussing it with the larger towns and then deciding whether or not to continue exploring the issue with the other towns.

Rockland City Manager Rosemary Kulow asked if other towns collected taxes twice a year. Some towns do and others have tax bills due once, in the fall. It was suggested that changing the tax structure to biannual billing might be a way to assist the towns' cash flow. Any change in the tax structure would require a town vote.

St. George Town Manager John Falla reported that St. George had formed an ad hoc committee to explore some of these same issues, tax collection time frame, cash flow, and changing to a fiscal year. The fiscal year change is independent of collection dates. If a town wants to improve cash flow, then the collection dates have to change. A town needs to identify what the issue or problem is, and then decide how to address it. A change to a fiscal year does not improve cash flow. A reduction in the amount a town needs to borrow for operations can be done outside of changing to a fiscal year.

Ms. Kulow asked what the benefit was for the County to change to a fiscal year. Commissioner Richard Parent commented that it appeared that there were two sets of books to be kept. Kathy Robinson was asked to address this issue.

Finance Director Kathy Robinson commented that the change would benefit the County by improving the cash flow and reduce the amount of money needing to be borrowed. The change would make reporting of jail funding and expenditures easier because the jail budget was approved by the state, which is on a fiscal year. There are now two audits required, one for the jail and one for the other department. An additional component can be purchased from MUNIS to monitor both years. The complexity of the reporting is a potential problem for the County, but it does not affect the towns.

2. Animal Control Committee:

County Administrator Andrew Hart reported meeting with the Animal Control Committee on July 21, 2009. The committee members are John Falla, Ray Sisk, Jeff Northgraves, Bob Peabody, and Commissioner Richard Parent. Those present at that meeting explained how animal control was handled in their towns. Some animal control calls are handled through dispatching services and some are direct calls to the animal control officer.

The committee discussed four (4) options for providing for animal control services. The first option would be to hire a county employee; the second to contract with an independent person, who would answer to the sheriff, the third to have the County dispatch animal control calls, and the fourth to develop an interlocal agreement to share animal control services/officer(s), similar to the one Appleton, Hope and Union has in place.

Some towns have been using one person, who has since moved from the area. Other towns have using a husband and wife team.

The committee decided to send out a survey to see how the towns provided for animal control services. The survey was sent out with 10 out of the 16 towns responding. The survey asked who the animal control officer was, what the annual budget was for animal control, how the service is dispatched, how many calls were received in a year, how the service was working, and any other additional comments on their animal control service as it is being provided.

The issues of accountability and cost saving were the main concerns. The focus was on finding ways to save money and increase efficiency of the service provided. These topics will be discussed further at the next meeting scheduled for the first week of September. No date has been set.

The survey showed many variables in animal control services provided and in the amount of money budgeted by the towns. It is difficult to fill the position. Some cost savings could be realized by towns sharing equipment instead each town buying its own traps and other necessary equipment. Interlocal agreements between several towns to share the cost, equipment and the services of one animal control officer may be an efficient way to provide service throughout the County.

A number of years ago, the Town of Union asked the County about providing animal control services for all the municipalities. The cost for a vehicle, staff and equipment to provide the service throughout the County was determined to be very costly. The towns would have to be assessed a fee for the service, similar to the fees assessed for dispatching. An equitable funding formula based on coverage and service to the mainland and the islands would be difficult to determine.

Ms. Kulow suggested that one solution was to have the towns contract with an individual who would provide the necessary equipment and could also be paid mileage. There would not be a need for an interlocal agreement. In the past, there were eight towns contracting with one person who has since retired. This plan worked well for many years. Some of the towns were given a name of a person to contact as a successor, but the person did not respond.

There was some discussion on whose responsibility it was if a town did not have an animal control officer. It was suggested that it was the sheriff's responsibility, while others indicated that the selectmen were responsible. It was agreed that it was difficult to fill the position.

Mr. Falla reported that the Town of St. George was without an animal control officer and recently had an incident involving a dog bite. The state police responded and are taking care of the legal aspect, but were unable to transport the dog to a facility to be quarantined. The state police only responded because it was an emergency and had legal ramifications. There are other animal welfare incidents that only need the services of an animal control officer.

At one time the dog license fees collected went to pay for property damages incurred, such as sheep being killed by a dog. It was unknown if this was still the case.

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center asked if the group was discussing working together because one animal control officer, serving many towns, had retired or is the group discussing animal control for other reasons.

Mr. Falla commented that the issue of being able to have continuity of service was important because of the turn over and having position vacant at times.

One of the options was to have a County employee be the animal control officer, but this was costly because of the benefits associated with having a full-time position. It was suggested that the County could coordinate the hiring process for a contracted person employed by several towns.

When asked what the City of Rockland was currently doing, Ms. Kulow said that the police department was handling animal control and advertising to fill the position on a part-time basis. It was suggested that during the hiring process, the candidates could be asked if they were interested in working for other towns in the area.

Finance Director Kathy Robinson suggested putting more money in town budgets for animal control because it seemed the same problems with turn-over kept occurring. There may be peak times of the year when the calls for service increase and other times when the call volume is down. It was suggested that there is not enough calls in any one town to justify a full-time position, which again points to sharing of an animal control officer by the towns in some format. There could, potentially, be multiple calls, especially in the summer and a backup officer needed. It was suggested that this could be filled by a sheriff's deputy. Some of the towns with their own police departments assist with animal control.

The discussion continued with many more suggestions. One was to have all the deputies trained in animal control. Dorothy Meriwether reported that South Thomaston had 55 hours to date spent on animal control, which emphasized that there was a definite need for animal control, but only on a part-time basis. Appleton, Hope and Union have an interlocal agreement that works well as long as Union's animal control officer position is filled. Another possibility is for all the towns to pool their funding for pay for several animal control officers and set up response criteria.

There was agreement on the difficulty of finding people interested in the job and the pay did not seem to make a difference. The job is difficult and takes a special type of person with interpersonal skills.

It was noted that the independent contracted animal control officers were self-employed and as such were not compensated for the time spent in court on animal related infractions. Another drawback for the independent contracted animal control officer is not only the down time, but the amount of time spent on the call-outs. Some incidents are more involved than others. Summons take a lot of time for non-licensing of dogs.

It was suggested that the sheriff be at the next meeting to continue the discussion of the County's involvement with animal control. Any use of deputies for animal control would need the support of the sheriff. The County would have to contract with the individual towns for animal control and their responsibilities defined.

3. Solid Waste Committee:

The Solid Waste Committee met on July 23, 2009 with Commissioner Roger Moody, Elmer Savage, Bob Peabody, Bill Chapman, Dorothy Meriwether, David St. Laurent, Rosemary Kulow, and Jim Guerra of the Midcoast Solid Waste Corporation (MCSWC), and Stacy and Larry Palmer of Compost Maine in attendance.

The discussion at the committee meeting centered around three (3) categories; Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) including contracts and license renewals, Recycling including separating issues and curbside pick-up by contractors to save on individuals' expenditures for gasoline, and Construction Demolition and Debris (CD & D). There did not appear to be much interest in the curbside pick-up idea.

It was noted that PERC could close when its current license expires in 2018, but the license will likely be renewed.

The down turn in the economy has caused a decline in MSW; between 10 and 20 percent locally and five (5) percent at PERC. One question was whether or not this decline was a short term shift or the beginning of a long term economic/cultural shift or trend based on changes in packaging.

The discussion on Recycling included increased recycling of additional plastics, other than #2 plastics, to reduce transportation and PERC fees. The idea of single stream recycling where all the recyclables are dumped together and someone is contracted to separate them out was not an option for further study. The State Planning Office (SPO) has data on "pay per bag" usage and costs throughout the State.

The third category discussed, Construction Demolition and Debris (CD & D), consists mostly of waste created by builders and contractors. The State does not require municipalities to provide disposal sites for CD & D materials. Most CD & D sites in Knox County require pay by truckload. Rockland has scales and some of the other sites are getting scales to weigh the trucks. It was suggested that 60 to 70 percent of CD & D could be diverted to PERC to reduce the impact on available space because the sites are expected to be filled to capacity in the next five (5) to eight (8) years.

The next meeting of the Solid Waste Committee is scheduled for September 10, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. A survey on solid waste was e-mailed out to the towns. The survey included questions pertaining to trucking and hauling contract expiration dates, trailer/container sizes (tonnage), descriptions of existing town contracts for waste disposal, location of waste destinations, and what hauling agreement exists for municipal wastewater bio-solids and their expiration dates.

With the information from the surveys, the committee could formulate some options to save money. For instance, if the County could combine all the trucking and hauling contracts and bid these out, there could be a cost savings because their business would expand.

The towns of Cushing, Waldoboro and Friendship haul their solid waste to Nobleboro. St. George hauls their solid waste to Norridgewalk. Others either use Rockport, Union (Tri-County facility) or Rockland.

Another area to explore is the bio-solid waste from the wastewater treatment plants. It may be possible to expand transportation contracts to include bio-solid waste with MSW to provide a more efficient manner of disposal and thereby save on disposal costs. It was suggested that there may be cost savings by hauling bio-solids inland and returning with composted materials to the coastal towns for municipal landscaping projects.

Rockland City Manager Rosemary Kulow suggested establishing a county-wide site for CD & D materials. Stacy and Larry Palmer from Compost Maine were interested in seeing if the municipalities might be interested in a county-wide composting site.

It was suggested that 60 percent of the recyclables could be sold and used as a source of revenue for the towns. The Tri-County site may be expanding. Any changes in hauling contracts and site locations need to be looked at in terms of cost. The survey will be sent out again.

4. Other:

Commissioner Anne Beebe-Center asked if there were any other issues or concerns to discuss. Cushing suggested that many towns might be interested in bulk purchasing of fuel oil. There is a group already that goes out to bid each year. This year the bid that was accepted was for \$2.05. Cushing ended up contracting for \$2.40 a gallon. There is cost savings some years by bidding as a group. The County plans to take over the bidding project. A survey will be sent out to all the towns to see if any other towns might be interested in participating.

The County puts out the salt bids each year and plans to add sand to the bidding process.

It was suggested that bidding for asphalt might be beneficial to the towns. The cost of asphalt depends on the cost of trucking the material to the paving site. It sometimes does not make sense, but Mariners, with a plant in Washington, quoted a higher price than Lane, out of Stockton Springs, did for trucking asphalt to the Town of Union. Joint bidding for asphalt may be not be feasible because of the trucking to different areas of the County.

Ms. Kulow suggested obtaining the information for cost comparisons. She shared her previous experience with bidding on asphalt. Bids include cost per ton delivered or picked up, cost of transportation to the various towns, and the cost for different mixes. The mix used varies according to the road surface needed.

It was suggested that a County road engineer could help the towns with planning for road improvements. If a model was developed for the animal control officer, it could be used to develop a model for the road engineer position. It would probably be easier to fill the road engineer position, even if it was only on a part-time basis. Road commissioners are not usually engineers. Towns would contract with the individual. The County could provide direction in developing the position and contracts.

III. Action List

Items to be researched or followed up for the next meeting
Animal Control Committee
Solid waste Committee
Meeting with Towns on Fiscal Year and information
Bids – Fuel (salt and sand are done for this year)
Look into Bidding for Asphalt
Explore Road Engineer

County Administrator Andrew Hart reported that the Town of Washington asked about sharing a grant writer with the County coordinating the services. The administrative fees included in the grants would be used to pay for the grant writer. It was suggested that some grants no longer include administrative fees. Midcoast Planning does a lot of grant writing for the towns. KWRED will be working with businesses, not necessarily on grants specifically. Knox County will be meeting with Lincoln County in the near future on KWRED and the services it will be providing with its limited staff of one. There was the issue of the County acting as the fiscal agent for KWRED which is now waiting for legal counsel.

IV. Next Meeting Date and Place

The next meeting of the Solid Waste Committee is scheduled for Thursday, October 1, 2009 at 2:30 p.m. in the Commissioners' Hearing room. A notice for the meeting will be sent out. There were not many responses to the Solid Waste Survey. It will be resent.

V. Adjourn

- A motion was made by Commissioner Richard Parent to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Roger Moody. A vote was taken with all in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 4:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Constance Johanson

**The Knox County Commission approved these minutes at their regular meeting
held on October 13, 2009.**

Anne H. Beebe-Center, Chair – Commissioner District #1

Richard L. Parent, Jr. – Commissioner District #2

Roger A. Moody – Commissioner District #3